

RICHEST MEN MAY GET A CHANCE TO SHOW THEY ARE NOT SO WORSE AFTER ALL

BY GILSON CARDNER.

Washington, April 12.—"Conscription of wealth" is likely to become the official administration plan for financing the war. President Wilson set forth the idea in his famous war message, and it has found a strong supporter in Claude Kitchin, chairman of the ways and means committee of the house, where all revenue legislation must originate. Kitchin is a pioneer in the direction of increased income tax, profit tax and inheritance taxes. He differs radically with Sec'y of the Treasury McAdoo, who always has favored the conventional bond issues and taxes on sugar, tea, coffee, gasoline and flivvers. So far Kitchin's plans have prevailed with congress.

The plan of the American committee on war finance, of which Amos Pinchot is head, would tax private incomes substantially as follows:

Two and a half per cent on incomes of \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year.

On incomes over \$10,000 a tax on a sliding scale, beginning at 10 per cent and rising to a point which will allow no individual to retain an annual income in excess of \$100,000 during the war.

Also restriction of profits on war supplies to 3½ per cent net, the delivery of defective supplies to be made a criminal offense punishable by imprisonment.

It is possible that this war will disclose America's rich men in a new light. A letter from one rich man to another reads, in part, as follows:

"The rich men of the country are, largely, men whose large fortunes are purely an incident of the vigor and force that impelled them to do great things, not for the purpose of making money, but only for the delight they experience in doing big things. These men, to a large extent at least, suffer extremely from what they feel is the unjust judgment of

the great mass of people. They feel that, while they have made great wealth for themselves, they have been of great service to the public, and that there is no way of their continuing their great activities for the benefit of the public and themselves without continuing and increasing their fortunes.

"When men by the practice of business acquire the habit of investing money profitably, it is very difficult for them, really very painful, to pour out their money in so-called philanthropy, because their own experience and observation have proved to them that the methods of philanthropy are generally very wasteful; that it takes from 50 to 75 cents of every dollar so invested to pay the middleman and the overhead charges, so that only from 25 to 50 cents of the dollar spent ever becomes a real investment. To such men it is a godsend to have the government come along and take away as an income or an inheritance tax their burdensome surplus.

"But we all know that we are condemned. Now, all of a sudden, there is presented to us an opportunity—the nation's great need for great sums of money—to show our patriotism, to show that we are really unselfish.

"If our war with Germany should cost the United States as much per annum as it is costing England, and if our rich people are made to pay for it out of their income, the financial burden of the country will be nil. The country will be gainder by tapping and reducing the great fortunes. And, once the people learn how easy it is and how beneficial to all parties concerned it is to get several billions a year by income tax, the country may be depended upon, hereafter, to raise most, if not all, of the revenue for the nation and the states and the cities from this source."